

account of the period of slavery, the whole being treated in a manner somewhat overdramatic for normal tastes, and very lavishly produced.

Although the history is interesting in itself, and helps to fill out some of the spaces in the "Story of the South," for so long the preserve of romantic novelists rather than sociologists, the most valuable part of this study is undoubtedly the description of the effects of the Unified Farm Programme on the society of Greene (as this depressed area was made the subject of an intensive reconstruction plan from the early thirties). Since the decline of productivity of the exhausted soil first became apparent at the turn of the century, little had been done to restore fertility, and this, together with the weevil and the depression of the inter-war period, had reduced Greene to a low level. It is not surprising, therefore, that population figures reflect a continuous exodus since well back in the nineteenth century.

The government programme attempted to persuade farmers to plant other crops less exhaustive of the soil, and to respect rotation—the low standards of living and farming are conveyed more strikingly by the photographs than by the text—and, as an incentive, those who signed on to co-operate in this scheme were aided materially by supplies of fertilizer and by pressure-cookers for canning fruit and vegetables, whilst the County Agent was at hand with advice on agricultural methods. Thus, at the same time, the ravages of erosion were checked, the dependence upon one staple crop lessened, and dietetic standards raised. The difficulties of accomplishing even this limited advance in view of the extremely low educational level of the population were considerable, and may come as a shock to those who think of the U.S.A. in terms of the campus and the sorority; it is the more interesting, therefore, to note the cultural activity resulting from prosperity, as here described in the development of library schemes and in the installation of radio made possible by R.E.A. This bears out the testimony of Lilienthal and others in relation to the educational progress observed

on the T.V.A. project as a result of elevated living standards and a heightened sense of individual self-respect as members of a flourishing society.

What is a little more disturbing about the book is its silences on subjects which are implicit in much of the material, but are seldom brought out into the open. For example, we are told of the activity of the Ku Klux Klan (and Greene seems to have been fortunately free from its influence) and are given many examples of racial discrimination, yet only rarely and incidentally is there any sign of resentment from either side. This may be fortuitous, but one feels the picture is a little too bright in certain places. However that may be, there is much to be learned from this work.

P. M. WORSLEY.

Herskovits, Melville J. *The Myth of the Negro Past.* New York, 1941. Harper. Pp. xiv + 374. Price \$4.

THIS book was the first of a general study of the Negro in the U.S.A. under the direction of Dr. Gunnar Myrdal of Stockholm University, and financed by the Carnegie Corporation. Professor Herskovits is particularly qualified to examine the cultural background of the New World Negro, since for many years he has undertaken and directed field-work not only in the U.S.A., but also in South America, the West Indies and West Africa.

He analyses, and demolishes, the customary assumptions about the Negro background held even by academic authorities such as Odum Dowd, and Puckett, and not least by the Negroes themselves, and stresses the fundamental unity of the cultural pattern of the regions from which the slaves were derived, as well as the high standard of that culture, as readers of his *Dahomey* will remember. After disproving the notion of the selection of "inferior" stock by the process of slaving, he examines the reactions of the Africans to their new existence, in particular the rich history of slave revolt and suicide records, showing that their reactions were by no means passive. The

analysis also reveals that lack of enthusiasm for their way of life, quasi-sabotage and the necessity of constant supervision do much towards explaining the low standard of productivity attained by the plantation system, and supports the findings of other workers, who, like Klineberg and Biesheuvel, look for the root of supposedly innate mental inferiority in the depressed social and economic position of the Negro. Against a background of race-riots and lynchings to-day, the description of the tension and hidden fears of the slave-owners becomes even more significant.

New interpretations of Negro institutions and ideas are suggested by the description of Africanisms in the secular and religious life of the Negro, formerly believed to be taken from the dominant culture: in the arts and language they are obvious, but we also see the influence of "matriarchal" and "extended" families, the vestiges of "classificatory" kinship, the preoccupation with mortuary rites and ancestor-spirits as being living influences in the New World. Especially important is the survival of different moral concepts which cut across the "good/bad" divisions of the ordinary European outlook in a way which gives the Negro greater mental resilience to the shocks of fortune, derived from African magical ideas, the concept of the "trickster-god," and the acceptance of foreign, conquering deities into the tribal cosmogony. These attitudes, the type of tribal economy, and social organization of the West African region help to explain how integration into the plantation-system was possible, and did not lead to the "voluntary" dying-out of so many Oceanic communities.

The deliberate tracking-down of Africanisms should not blind the reader to the other cultural elements in Negro life—although the author points this out at one stage; and it is sobering to remember the eighteenth-century English lyrics and flamenco influences musicologists have noted in Negro music of the U.S.A. and the West Indies.

Amongst the wide fields of suggested research, the psychologists should be able to provide some valuable data, if the difficul-

ties of comparative testing, for example, described by Porteous and Biesheuvel are overcome. The sound methodology of Professor Herskovits's book is a pointer, and an excellent vindication of the fuller understanding of present social phenomena to be gained by clearer knowledge of the past.

P. M. WORSLEY.

SEX DIFFERENCES

Scheinfeld, Amram. *Women and Men.* London, 1947. Chatto & Windus. Pp. 394. Price 15s.

THE aim of this book is "to help women and men towards a better understanding of themselves in relation to each other." In the preface the author states that when he first embarked upon this task five years ago he had intended to devote his book largely to the social factors influencing the relationships between men and women, giving only passing attention to the biological sex differences. In this approach he was influenced by the "prevailing tendency" among social scientists to ascribe sex differences in behaviour, capacity and temperament largely to environmental causes. This point of view first gained currency in the 'twenties through the behaviourist and feminist movements. Both these movements naturally tended to minimise the importance of the innate biological differences between the sexes, for the behaviourist movement set out to prove the fundamental equality of all human beings, and the feminist movement to achieve for women as much equality as possible with men. The extreme lengths to which this point of view was carried may be seen in the work by Mathilde and Mathias Vaerting, entitled *The Dominant Sex*, published in 1923. Here, all sex differences in temperament, instinct, behaviour, size and strength are regarded as "merely the characters of the subordinate sex under monosexual dominance," which will "disappear slowly but surely when equality of rights is established."

Mr. Scheinfeld writes that after some research into the subject he had become convinced that these theories were highly